The Religious Complex in Eighteenth-Century Poona
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I. Poona (18.38 N / 73.53 E), the headquarters of the district of the same name in the state of Maharashtra in India, began as an obscure village in the dim distant past of the first millennium A.D. It began to acquire importance in the middle of the seventeenth century as a storm-center in the Maratha struggle for independence under the great Shivaji (1627–1680). But it was only with the advent of the Peshwas, the hereditary prime ministers of the Maratha sovereigns of Satara, that Poona became the virtual capital of the burgeoning Maratha empire. Balaji Vishwanath (1713–1720), the first Peshwa, acquired it as a part of his "feudal" assignment and his son and successor, Bajirao Ballal (1720–1740), made it his capital in 1730.[1] From that time onward, until virtually the end of the century, Poona functioned as the nerve center of the politics of much of western, central, northern and southern India.

The transformation of Poona from a minor township into a bustling metropolis was entirely the work of six generations of the Peshwa family. Members of the Chitpavan Brahman caste with the cognomen of Bhat and migrants from the territories of the Siddis of Janjira on the western coast, the Peshwa family signalized the advent of a new political and cultural element of Maratha history. Balaji Vishwanath began his career as a junior revenue official during the opening decade of the eighteenth century and rose to the position of the mainstay of Shahu's power (1708–1749). The two major factors that shaped the contours of the Peshwa's power and their city of Poona were their caste affiliations and attendant religious claims.[2]

Poona is somewhat unusual as an urban center in the history of Eighteenth Century India. It had neither the commercial importance of Surat in Gujarat, the great entrepot of the Mughal empire, nor was it a major transportation center as was Burhanpur in Madhya Pradesh. Unlike Agra, located in the heart of the indigo producing area of Biana and the imperial capital, Poona had no agricultural hinterland of commercial importance. Even in military terms it commanded no extraordinary situation for throughout its history its exposed military position subjected it to some devastating raids by hostile powers such as the Nizam or rival confederate leaders like the Shindes and Holkars. Poona, in essence, was a bureaucratic-military city developed to serve the special needs of a ruling family in its political, social and cultural demands.[3]

Poona's history of the Maratha period begins as a "little ruined hamlet" in the fief of Poona and Supa owned by Shahaji (1599–1664) the father of Shivaji. Shivaji spent his childhood there with his mother Jijabai and mentor Dadoji Konddev where the family was housed in an unpretentious house. But its exposed position led Shivaji to make Raygadh his capital. Through the turbulent times of Sambhaji (1680–1689) and Rajaram (1689–1700) and his widow Tarabai (1700–1707) Poona continued its precarious existence and then became part of the fief of the first Peshwa, Balaji Vishwanath as mentioned earlier. Balaji resided in Poona off and on and it was only during the regime of his son and successor Bajirao Ballal that the city began its rise to greatness. Poona, at that time, was called a *Kasba*, a military cantonment—market-town with a population of a few thousand. Bajirao I acquired some five acres occupied by huts of fishermen and weavers for the building of his own residence, the foundations of which were laid on Saturday, January 10, 1730. The Brahmans officiating at the ceremony were given a *dakṣiṇā* (ritual offering) of Rs. 1–8–0. The two-storied palace was built during the next two years which was first formally occupied on Saturday, January 22, 1732. The *dakṣiṇā* given at this time was Rs. 15–½–0 and the cost of building the palace—later famous as the Shanwarwada—was R. 16,110.[4]

The beginnings of Poona's urbanization, thus, must be dated in the early part of the 1730s. The Peshwa's presence in the town necessitated the congregation of his immediate supporters, the *Sardars*, most of whom were Brahmans, who were given lots of land to build their own houses and barracks to accommodate their armed retainers. After 1749, with the death of Shahu, Poona virtually became the capital of the Maratha empire serving as a center for the influx of soldiers and bureaucrats serving the Peshwa and his government.

II. In its heyday, Poona is described as three miles in length and two in breadth. It was located at the confluence of two small rivers, the Mula and the Mutha, which were also the principal sources of water supply. Balaji Bajirao wanted to build fortified walls round the city, but had to abandon the

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[1] For a brief history of Poona's pre-Maratha past, see R. C. Dhere, "Punyachi Aitihasik ani Dharmik Parshwabhumi" in H. V. Inamdar, et al., (eds.), *Punyai* (Poona, 1977), pp. 25–28; G. S. Sardesai (ed.), *Selections From The Peshwa Daftar* (Bombay, 1930–?) XXX, No. 1; XL, No. 24; hereafter abbreviated as SPD.

[2] For the early history of the Peshwas, see G. S. Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas* (Bombay, 1958), II, pp. 23–26.

[3] For a history of seventeenth century cities, Surat, Burhanpur, Ahmedabad, see B. G. Gokhale, *Surat in the Seventeenth Century* (London and Malmo, 1979), pp. 7ff.; 75–78.

[4] D. B. Parasnis, *Poona in Bygone Days* (Bombay, 1921), pp. 1–2, 81–82.

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project in view of the objections raised by his overlord Shahu. Poona began to grow with the development of its *peths* or residential-cum-commercial wards named after the days of the week. The Shukrawar (Friday), Budhwar (Wednesday), Shaniwar (Saturday) and Raviwar (Sunday) Peths, in addition to the Kasba, were completed before 1740. The next Peshwa added the Vetal-Guruwar (Demon-Thursday). The Nagesh or Nihal, Ganesh and Narayan and Mangalwar (Tuesday) *Peths* were in existence by 1755. The Bhawani, Sadashiv, Somwar, Rasta, Nana were built before 1790. The total number of *Peths* was 18. Estimates of Poona's population range from 40,000 to over 100,000 with the number of houses ranging from 6,000 to over 10,000.[5]

The supply of water to Poona came from a large number of household wells. From the middle of the century large-scale waterworks were built with the construction of four aqueducts and a number of tanks.[6] The city also boasted of many specially laid out parks and gardens. An English observation of 1805 states that "the principle streets are paved with flags and which is reckoned one of the best built native towns in India."[7] The composition of the population reflected Poona's special character. As Professor D. R. Gadgil observes, Poona "did not command any of the major ancient trade routes of the Deccan. There is no mountain pass for descending into the Konkan in the Sahyadri ranges directly in the western hinterland of Poona. The eastern country is an open Desh country and most of the important trade routes of old did not touch Poona. Poona only commands the communications to its immediate hinterland, the Maval tract. Its chief asset seems to be that it was near an important ford of the Mutha river. It was therefore a strategic position for military purposes."[8] As it developed into the capital of the Peshwas, Poona did witness some commercial activity though it was largely related to the service and ancilliary industries. The merchants, therefore, did not form, either numerically or in terms of power, a significant element in Poona's population. Of much greater importance were the bankers but since many of them dealt largely with the ruling classes in their financial transactions, their relationships with commerce were at best tenuous. Of much greater significance were people belonging to the armed forces and/or the bureaucracy and the sudden influx of large bodies of troops either for campaigns or ceremonials such as the Dasara considerably added to the numbers of the city's population. The upper crust was formed by the ruling family and the aristocratic military commanders whose number, though relatively small, played a decisive role in Poona's politics. We will not deal with these elements in the present paper as they properly belong to a larger urban history of the city. Of special interest to our purpose here are the Brahmans and their role in Poona's urban history during the period of Brahman supremacy.

III. With the emergence of the Peshwas as leaders of the Maratha Confederacy the Brahmans, especially their Chitpavan caste, became the dominant minority. In spite of modern historical revisionism the Maratha liberation movement had a strong religious overtone. Shivaji prided himself on the title "Protector of cows and Brahmans—(*Gobrāhmaṇapratipālaka*)" and his contemporaries hailed him as a liberator of Hindus from the Bijapur-Mughal Muslim bondage. The emerging power of Balaji Vishwanath and his son Bajirao I faced serious challenges both from the Pant Pratinidhi and the Maratha war-lords such as the Gaekwads, Dabhades and Angres. The Peshwas needed a loyal and secure social base outside of their armed retainers for their power. This they sought in the loyalty of the Brahmans in general and their Chitpavan caste in particular. Following the lead of the Bhat-Peshwa family a number of Chitpavan families streamed into Poona and were given important positions in the armed forces and the administration.

This emergence of Brahman preeminence in the Maratha empire was both a symptom and a cause of a significant change in the religious environment of Maharashtra. The older *bhakti* movement with its base in Pandharpur and its generally egalitarian social approach had begun to recede under the onrushing wave of a new Brahmanism of which the Peshwa became the chief patron. In literature it was reflected in the development of what is known as *paṇḍita-kāvya*—poetry of the savants—a successor literary genre to Santa-kāvya[9]—poetry of the saints. The topics of the new genre were drawn from the great epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* and Brahmanical forms and worship and ritual had become the prevalent instruments of religiosity at least among the higher segments of society. If *bhakti*, as argued by M. G. Ranade, was the inspirational force behind the early Maratha movement for independence, the new Brahmanism became the intellectual and spiritual basis of the Peshwa hegemony.[10]

[5] D. R. Gadgil, *Poona, A Socio-Economic Survey* (Poona, 1952), II, pp. 11–21; hereafter abbreviated as *Poona*; M. Kosambi, *A Socio-Ecological Study of Two Indian Cities 1650–1950* (Stockholm, 1980), p. 154; D. R. Gadgil, *Pune Shaharatil Mahajan Va Nagarsheth* (Poona, 1962), p. 11; R. D. Choksey, *A History of British Diplomacy at the Court of the Peshwas* (Poona, 1951?), pp. i–ii.

[6] For details see M. S. Mate, *Maratha Architecture* (Poona, 1959), pp. 43–44.

[7] R. J. Macintosh (ed.), *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Macintosh* (London, 1836), I, p. 275.

[8] *Poona*, p. 12.

[9] For the three traditions in early Marathi literature, see G. N. Relekar and Y. D. Bhide (eds.), *Maharashtriya Santa* (Bombay, 1952).

[10] M. G. Ranade and K. T. Telang, *Rise of Maratha Power and Other Essays and Gleanings from Maratha Chronicles* (Bombay, 1961), p. 5.

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This new Brahmanism became the bridge or nexus between the Great Tradition of Classical India and the Little Tradition reflected in aspects of the *bhakti* movement. It took over both the great epics from the former and numerous Brahmanized folk cults of the latter. In this context Poona not only became the Peshwa's military and bureaucratic base but also acquired the character of the religious base for the new power. In this context Poona becomes a somewhat unique urban center in the XVIIIth century.

Before the rise of the Peshwas, Poona had few pretensions as a religious center. Like other townships it had its own local gods and godlings (Vetal-worship is an instance in point, as also the pre-Peshwa significance of Parvati as a site of a folk cult) to which were added temples dedicated to the worship of puranic deities such as Ganesh. During Shivaji's time there existed the Ganpati temple in the Kasba, perhaps the oldest shrine of the Maratha period. But Poona had neither the antiquity nor the sanctity of a Banaras, Puri, Dwarka, Nasik or Pandharpur. The Mutha river by which it was sited could never claim the religious significance of a Chandrabhaga or Krishna or Godavari. But the XVIIIth century brought to it a host of temples and hordes of Brahmans which contributed considerably to its urban and economic activities. We will now deal briefly with the history of temple building in Poona and the development of the religious institutional structure centered round them as dimensions of Poona's urbanism.

IV. By 1810–1811 Poona and its vicinity had some 250 temples receiving state help. There were 52 temples of Maruti, 18 for Rama, 9 of Vishnu, 34 of Vithoba and 12 of Krishna. Rama and Krishna incarnations had 73 temples, Mahadeo-Shiva had 40 and Ganapati had 36. The old Little Tradition gods had 32 places of worship, Devi had 10, but Dattatrya had only one. In addition, there were 8 Muslim dargas.[11] Much of this temple building took place in some seven decades, which works out to over 30 temples a year. Many of them, if not all, had arrangements for an elaborate ritual worship with a direct dependence of over 2,500 (ten persons to a temple) people related to these shrines. The larger ones such as Parvati must have had many more people professionally connected with them. This ritual worship, as will be dealt with later, needed a large number of ritual articles such as flowers, perfumes and ungents, oil-lamps, bells, utensils of copper and brass (and silver for the great temples), cereals and other food-stuffs for ritual oblations (*naivedya*), musical instruments for recitations (*kathā* and *kīrtan*) and singing of devotional songs (*bhajan*). The economic and social significance of these materials and activities for Poona's urbanism could not have been insignificant.

The center of the religious complex in Poona was, undoubtedly, the Parvati group. Located in the southwest part of the city, Parvati is a small hill with a shrine dedicated to a prehistoric goddess. The first great Brahmanical temples were built during the time of the third Peshwa (Balji Bajirao, 1740–1761). Before the rise of the Peshwas the hereditary priesthood of the temple belonged to the Purandare family which later became allies and high officers under the Peshwas. The initial drive behind building the great temples is attributed to Kashibai, mother of the third Peshwa, who began the construction work in 1748. The installation of the images occurred in April 11, 1749, when idols of Devadeveshwar (in the form of a *bāṇ*), a silver idol of Mahadev with golden images of Ganapati and Parvati, a stone image of Ganapati and the pre-existing image of Parvati were ritually consecrated. The celebrations lasted four days and cost Rs. 4,320. A fine garden called Hirabag was also laid out. In 1760 the third Peshwa had the temple spires gilded with gold weighing 1,020 *tolas*. In 1763 Poona was sacked by the forces of Nizamali who attacked the Parvati group of temples and desecrated them. In 1764 Peshwa Madhavrao (1761–1772) ordered reinstallation of some idols removed for safety and installation of new idols of Narayan, Surya and Kartikswami. He also ordered the stationing of 25 soldiers to guard the temples. Some buildings burned down during the raid had to be rebuilt. The tank at the temple had to be constantly dredged. In 1769 new residential quarters with cooking facilities were set up. An interesting annexture to the group was a menagerie housing wild animals in which Narayanrao (1772–1773) and Madhavrao II (1774–1795) were very much interested. At the foot of the hill the third Peshwa had set up an enclosure of masonry with four gates. This was called the *ramṇa* where the annual distribution of charity and gifts to learned Brahmans during the month of Shravan (July–August) was carried out. An English observation of 1799 describes Parvati as a "very respectable temple, and much resorted to; and when lighted up on great occasions, it shows well; and from its top is a fine view of the city and environs."[12] Built at a height of 216 feet from the base the way to the top was carried over a hundred wide and long stone-steps so that elephants could easily make their way up. Being a "royal" temple, Parvati was the most extensive and lavishly equipped religious establishment in Poona.

The other temples built by the Peshwa family were the Amriteswar, Tulsibag and the Omkareshwar. The Belbag temple was built in 1766 as a result of the installation of idols of Vishnu and Ganpati by Nana Fadanavis, the finance minister of Peshwa Madhavrao I and later guardian of Madhavrao's two successors, in 1765–1769 at a cost of Rs. 25,000. The Peshwa granted a revenue of four villages (Rs. 5,000) for the upkeep of the shrine. Nana Fadanavis visited it almost every day and it was only with the accession of

[11] Ibid., p. 201.

[12] Parasnis, op. cit., pp. 28–37; *SPD*, XVIII, Nos. 181, 182; XXII, Nos. 193, 259; XXXII, Nos. 16, 176.

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Bajirao II (1796–1818) that the temple lost its importance in governmental patronage.[13]

We may briefly refer here to the two *daraghs* of the elder and younger Shaikh Salla. Built over the ruins of desecrated Hindu temples during the rule of the Sultans of Bijapur, they were not only allowed to continue their functions as Muslim shrines but also enjoyed, from time to time, patronage from the Peshwa's government.

But worship at the great temples and patronage to established religious centers was only one aspect of the role of religion in Poona's urbanism. A great deal, perhaps the major part, of religious activity was centered round personal and family religious observances. Each family had its own family presiding deity (*kuladaivata*) whose worship was performed every day. Among Brahmans, especially the Peshwas family, there were the celebrations associated with the performance of the required number of sacraments (*saṃskāras*) such as the thread-ceremony (*upanāyana*), marriage (*vivāha*) and funeral obsequies (*antyeṣṭhi*). Every day there was the round of bathing and ritual prayers in the morning and often in the evening (*snāna* and *sandhyā*) and the observance of numerous propitiatory vows (*navas*) undertaken by various members of the Peshwa's family. The eclipses of the sun and the moon were also religious and ritual observances and the employment of astrologers at the court a regular feature.[14]

Among the great festivals were the Sankrant (vernal equinox), the Holi, Ganesh utsav, Navratra, Dasara and Dīwali. On the occasion of the Sankrant the Peshwa distributed *tilgul* (sugar-coated sesame seeds) with customary gifts to dignitaries in Poona and other towns and cities. The Holi, a spring festival, was celebrated with great gaiety with music and dancing by the dancing girls maintained at the court. The annual ritual worship of Ganesh was also a great festival and the Peshwa's palace, the Shanwarwada, had a special hall where the idol of the elephant-headed god of wealth, wisdom and success was ceremonially installed and worshipped for twelve days, after which came the ceremony of immersion of the clay idol in the river. The immersion ceremony was an occasion of great pomp when selected infantry and cavalry units paraded through the streets with the idol carried in a palanquin. On each of the twelve days there were special recitations from the epics and *purāṇas* by well-known reciters specially invited for the festival and music and dances in the late evenings and nights. The Navratra (nine nights) was a festival dedicated to the goddess Durgā and culminated in the Dasara (tenth day) with obvious martial overtones. Traditionally the Marathas started their military campaigns after the Dasara day and the festival was marked by banquets and giving of gifts as well as preparations for the projected campaign. The last great festival of the year was the Diwali (Festival of Lights) celebrated with a round of worship, dinners and giving of gifts.

Of the splendor of the Ganesh room we have a description of a Captain Moor who visited Poona toward the end of the XVIIIth century. He says: "He (the Peshwa) has a very magnificent room in his palace at Poona, called the Ganes room, in which, on particular festivals in honour of Ganes, he receives numerous visitors; I have seen more than a hundred dancing girls in it at one time. At one end, in a recess, is a fine gilt figure, I believe of marble, of this deity, and many other mythological decorations around it; the other end of the room, bounded by a narrow strip of water in which fountains play, is open to a garden of fragrant flowers, which, combined with the murmuring of the fountains, has a very pleasing effect." Documents of the times of the Peshwas give us some interesting information of the range of activities and expenses involved during the celebration of the Ganapati festival. An account of 1791 mentions that the image was made of clay while a year later (1792) the image is mentioned as being of gold. The installation of the image was always accompanied by music, vocal and instrumental, and the image was placed in a specially constructed and elaborately decorated idol-house (*makhara*) with hundreds of lamps and peacock feathers. For four days twenty-one Brahmans were employed to perform a special religious ritual (*anusthāna*). The evenings saw recitations from the epics and *purāṇas* (*kīrtana*) by specially appointed leading preachers (*haridāsa*). The strictly entertainment part came at the closing of the days with musical and dance performances by well-trained artists numbering five to seven groups (*tafe*). The installation and the closing ceremonies were announced with firing of guns. The expenses for these celebrations amounted to between Rs. 2,500 and 2,682. The idols cost Rs. 1,500 and the cost of festive illumination came to Rs. 1,000. The Peshwa and some of his leading officials such as Nana Fadnis often visited Theur or celebrations in the Kasbas in the city for ritual worship (*darśan*) at leading shrines.[15]

The two festivals with a tenuous religious association were the Holi and the Dasara. The Holi was a festival of the vernal equinox and became the Indian version of a Baccanalia. It lasted for five days in Spring with the lighting of a bonfire and ending with the squirting of various colors in powder or liquid forms. It was celebrated by all sections of Hindu society all over northern, central and western India, each social class holding its own group festival. There was a great deal of light-hearted frolic and at the Peshwa's palace persons of rank

[13] See Mate, op. cit., pp. 73ff.; *SPD*, XXI, No. 162; XXXLII, No. 77.

[14] *SPD*, XXII, No. 238; XXXII, No. 179; XXXIII, No. 16.

[15] Parasnis, op. cit., pp. 9–10; *SPD*, XXII, Nos. 179, 247; XXXII, Nos. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30; R. M. Joshi (ed.), *Poona Akhbars* (Hyderabad, 1953), Vols. I–II–III, I, p. 255; II, pp. 10, 162–63; III, pp. 137, 166, 183; hereafter abbreviated as *PA*.

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were invited for dinners and after-dinner social conviviality. The most important aspect was the performances of music, dancing and plays of a quasi-religious significance. In many parts the festival celebrated the Krishna legend especially as a god of youth and love-play.[16]

The Dasara came at the conclusion of the Navratri (Nine Nights dedicated to Durgā) and was associated with exploits of the epic heroes, Rama and the Pandavas. Special encampments with richly decorated tents and caprisoned animals such as elephants and horses were set up for the occasion. The Peshwa's retainers and many noblemen from the diverse parts of the empire attended this festival and exchanged gifts. It also marked, as mentioned above, the beginning of the campaigning season for the Maratha armies as it signified the end of the monsoon rains, facilitating large-scale and extensive movements of troops.[17]

The *Dakṣiṇā* institution was of the greatest significance for its impact on the society and economy of the city of Poona during the XVIIIth century. It was initiated by Trimbakrao Dabhade, the Maratha General under Shahu, and was simply continued by Bajirao I and developed in scope and extent by his successor. This involved the distribution of sums of money to assembled Brahmans in recognition of their piety and learning. It was done during the month of *śrāvaṇa* (July–August) during the height of the rainy season. The four months (*chaturmāsya*) involved a number of ritual observances especially for the Brahman caste, including abstention from the use of onions and garlic and one meal (evening) during the day. The month of śrāvaṇa was regarded as particularly holy and the temples held sessions of the reading of the scriptures, especially the epics and the *purāṇas*. The distribution ceremony was held in the *Ramana*, a high enclosure of masonry built by the Peshwa Balaji Bajirao, at the foot of the Parvati Hill. The enclosure had four gates at each of which the *dakṣiṇā* was distributed by the Peshwa (often in person) and his chosen officers. Before the largess was given the person's caste and the extent of his learning were carefully ascertained as cases of fraudulent claims were not unheard of. In addition to the distribution at Parvati Hill, similar distributions were also made at the Palace to sundry supplicants including the destitute. The rate of distribution ranged from Rs. 7 to Re. 1 per person, depending upon the qualification and/or need of the person. We have some stray figures of the amounts and numbers of Brahmans involved over a period of eight years. These are as follows:

Year	Number of Recipients	Amount
1735	3,000	not available
1753	80,000	Rs. 1,600,000
1754	65,000	800,000
1775	n/a	61,108
1781	20,000	100,000
1806	60,000	194,560
		+ 25,000
1808	n/a	8,512
1815	4,000	2,500
8 years	232,000	Rs. 2,791,680[18]

Besides these annual expenses the Peshwa family and members of the Brahman aristocracy spent considerable amounts for ceremonies such as weddings, investiture of the sacred thread (*munja*), funerals, annual post-mortem oblations *śraddhā*), gifts of cows and occasional feeding of large numbers of Brahmans in and outside of Poona. Stray figures of such expenses between 1733 and 1806 amount to a total of Rs. 68,562. The total number of Brahmans fed on various occasions during the same period is 21,500. The fourth marriage of Bajirao II involved an expense of Rs. 47,459. Available information being far from complete, it may reasonably be assumed that the total output for religious purposes must have been at least ten million rupees, at a conservative estimate.[19]

V. What were the implications of religious activity on such a scale for the urban history of Poona during the eighteenth century? The impact must have been felt in three distinct dimensions. First, the number of people involved affected the population of Poona. As mentioned above, Poona had a total of some 250 temples of various kinds ranging from small wayside shrines to elaborate complexes such as the one at Parvati. Assuming that each establishment was served on an average by four priests (*pujārī*) the number of such temple-associated priests runs to 1,000. The number of recipients of the *dakṣiṇā*, as seen from the available evidence, ranged between 3,000 and 65,000. It will be reasonable to assume that an average of some 10,000 Brahmans received some form of largess from the Peshwa every year. A document of 1768 mentions that the monthly salary of a Kanada Brahman was Rs. 4. This gives some idea of the economic impact of the Dakshina institution both for the government and the recipients. These Brahmans came from diverse parts of India

[16] *SPD*, XXII, No. 311; *PA*, III, pp. 151–53.

[17] *PA*, II, pp. 50, 52, 56; *SPD*, XVIII, No. 125; XXII, Nos. 170, 178, 246.

[18] *SPD*, XXII, Nos. 152, 245, 260, 295; XXIII, No. 66; XXXII, Nos. 169, 199; XLIII, Nos. 82, 83, 89; *PA*, I, pp. 219, 231; also see S. V. Desai, *Social Life in Maharashtra Under The Peshwas* (Bombay, 1980), pp. 93–94.

[19] *SPD*, XVIII, No. 53, 130; XXII, Nos. 59, 86, 98, 125, 146, 178, 220, 223, 231, 260, 267, 269, 334; XXX, No. 147; XXXI, No. 162; XXXII, Nos. 174, 183, 185, 186, 188, 190, 191, 198; XXXIX, No. 48; XLIII, No. 77; *PA*, p. 290; III, pp. 136, 157.

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such as Banaras, Gujarat, Central India, Karnatake, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, not to mention Brahmans from various parts of Maharashtra itself. This annual influx of Brahman population gave Poona an urban characteristic very much different from any other capital city or administrative center. We also find that large bodies of troops gathered in Poona from time to time. When we add these to the annual influx of Brahmans, we get some idea of the seasonally fluctuating population of the city. We have, therefore, a picture of a city that had some 60,000 to 100,000 of a permanent population to which every year were added itinerant populations of troopers and priests of the magnitude of 40,000 to 50,000. Housing and feeding such a population must have generated its own economic effects for the city.

This influx of Brahmans gave Poona the character of a city dominated by Brahmans, their economic needs and lifestyle. We have no instance of another such large city of this character in the urban history of India. Poona reflected the mores of a lifestyle dominated by Brahmanical ideas to a much greater extent than any other city. Most of the prominent Sardars resident in Poona were Brahmans and these formed the Poona aristocracy. The non-Brahman Sardars, though equally, if not more, powerful (the Gaikwads, Shindes, Holkars, Bhonsales) lived in Gujarat, northern and central India and visited Poona from time to time. They had but an indirect influence on the politics of Poona controlled by Rastes, Gokhales, Purandares, Bhats and Bhanus. These Brahmans provided the social base for the power of the Peshwa with its own strengths and weaknesses.

Secondly, the impact of the influx of Brahmans and the existence of numerous religious establishments created a peculiar economic complex for Poona. They needed the assistance of a number of service industries. Flowers, perfumes, oil for lamps, musical instruments, utensils of copper, brass and silver, cloths of various kinds and food-stock were constantly in demand. We have documents mentioning the planting of numerous flower-gardens and of gardeners employed to tend them. Poona hardly produced anything it used within its confines. It drew most of the materials from different parts of Maharashtra and caravans carrying these goods from Ratnagiri, Bassein, Satara, Miraj and Surat are frequently mentioned. The arrangements of the *peths* followed trade and occupational specialization. Gardeners, weavers, copper smiths, oil-mongers, tailors, carpenters, masons and artists formed a numerous class of service personnal catering to the needs of the Brahmans and their religious ritual.

The existence of such a numerous Brahman population may be assumed to have been congenial to creativity in learning and literature. But this does not seem to have been the case with Poona city in the eighteenth century. The Peshwas and their aristocratic retainers did maintain libraries of works of a religious genre but most of these were copies of old compilations or creations of writers who lived outside Poona. As in the case of material goods, even in literature and music Poona lived off the creativity of surrounding regions. The Brahmans that lived in Poona on a continuing basis as well as those who frequented it to receive *dakṣiṇā* were, more often than not, either purveyors of a traditional ritual or erudite in age-old texts.

Finally the sheer monetary impact of the Brahman population and its institutions, also gave Poona a peculiar character. On an average some half a million rupees a year were directly expended on religious functions. In the absence of figures of governmental revenue and expenditures it is difficult to say what percentage religious expenditures formed in the total budget. Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859), who served as the British Resident in Poona and later as Governor of the Bombay Presidency, gave an estimate of the Peshwa's revenues in 1815 as Rs. 9,671,735 of which Rs. 728,118 came from the Province of Poona. The opening decade of the nineteenth century saw the decline of the power of the Peshwa and hence the figure for Poona cannot be taken as a true reflection of finances of the earlier period. Assuming that the revenues collected during the earlier period when the Peshwa's finances were in a robust condition the figure for the province of Poona may be placed at five million rupees. This gives us some 10% of the revenue being directly expended by the Peshwa family on religious activities. To this may be added the additional amounts spent by the Brahman aristocracy and the economic activities generated by the religious ritual and we may reasonably assume that religion contributed up to 15% to the economic life of Poona. This is, by no means, a small amount.[20] Thus on both counts of population and amounts of money involved in religious activities Poona offers an unusual example of urban development in the eighteenth century.

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[20] *SPD*, XXII, No. 191; for Elphinstone's estimate see H. B. Vashishta, *Land Revenue and Public Finance in Maratha Administration* (Delhi, 1975), pp. 186–87.

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